

**Governor's Upper Yellowstone River Task Force**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**November 28, 2000**  
**Yellowstone Inn**  
**Meeting began at 7:00 p.m.**

**I. Introduction**

**Members Present:**

John Bailey, Chair	Jerry O'Hair
Roy Aserlind	Rod Siring
David Haug	Bob Wiltshire
Brant Oswald	

**Others Present:**

Allan Steinle, Ex-Officio	Dean Yashan	Leanne Roulson
Joel Tohtz, Ex-Officio	Jeanne-Marie Souvigney	Pete Story
John Logan, Ex-Officio	Tom Hallin	Karl Biastoch
Laurence Siroky, Ex-Officio	Jim Robinson	Duncan Patten
Tom Olliff, Ex-Officio	CW Patrick	Andy Dana
Liz Galli-Noble, Coordinator	Frieda Hicks	Burt Williams
Amy Miller, Administrative Secretary	Chuck Dalby	Leanne Roulson
Stan Todd	Dennis Glick	Lew Stringer

John Bailey formally introduced Tom Olliff, a new Ex-Officio Task Force member representing Yellowstone National Park. He is replacing Wayne Brewster. Tom is the Chief of the Branch of Natural Resources in the Park.

**II. Prior Meeting Minutes**

The October 19, 2000 minutes were approved as written.

**III. Financial Updates**

**1. Grant Spending Report:**

Amy Miller reported on the following to the Task Force:

<i>EXPENDED GRANTS</i>			
<b>Grant Name</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Study Component</b>
DNRC Watershed Planning Assistance Grant	6-30-99	2,100.00	Physical Features Inventory
DNRC HB223 Grant	7-30-99	10,000.00	Aerial Photography
DNRC Riparian/Wetlands Educational Grant	6-30-00	960.99	Hydrologic Response to The 1988 Fires
DEQ 319 Grant (1 <sup>st</sup> )	9-30-00	40,000.00	Coordinator Position
<i>CURRENT GRANTS</i>			
<b>Grant Name</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Spent</b>	<b>Remaining Balance</b>
DEQ Start-Up Grant	49,138.00	23,737.28	25,400.72
DNRC RDGP Grant	299,940.00	166,983.08	132,956.92
DEQ 319 Grant (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	58,000.00	6,411.37	51,588.63
DNRC HB223 (Riparian Trend Analysis Study)	6,500.00	0	6,500.00
DNRC Watershed Planning			

Assistance Grant (Upland Study)	10,000.00	993.60	9,006.40
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John Bailey requested that the US Army Corps of Engineers budget of \$320,000 also be listed in the financial report.

## 2. Funding Updates

Liz Galli-Noble reported that a letter of introduction had been written to the Federal Unified Watershed Approach--via the Bureau of Land Management who manages the program--requesting financial help. The BLM has funds available for watersheds.

## IV. Proposed Wildlife Assessment Presentation

Dr's Andrew Hansen and Jay Rotella of MSU were invited to discuss their past studies in the area and to present their new Wildlife Assessment proposal.

The following outline was presented:

1. Introduction: briefly described how they got involved in the Task Force effort.
2. Background: briefly described their professional backgrounds.
3. Tonight's Talk: let the audience know some of the work they have been doing in the area and what they have proposed for the Task Force wildlife study. Let the audience know who we are.
4. Previous Study:
  - The question
    - Society increasingly recognizes that native species are valuable.
    - How can we maintain viable populations of native species across landscapes?
5. Previous Conceptual Frameworks: given our myriad of species and huge land area, some sort of conceptual framework is needed to guide landscape management.
  - Over the years, several have evolved.
    - Game species - their individual needs lead to edge creation.
    - Cover type - shift to interest in full array of species, maintain variety of cover types.
    - Disturbance/seral stage - not all habitats within a cover type are of equal value: structurally-complex as produced by natural disturbance and especially old-growth are important.
    - Spatial configuration - size, shape, isolation of patch influences what can live within them. Hence, current focus on fragmentation and connectivity.
6. Previous Bird Studies Overview: described below.
7. Upper Yellowstone River Wildlife Assessment: reviewed first draft of proposal.

**Previous Bird Studies Overview:** Some of the specifics covered in their presentation are as follows:

### **Introduction**

- Since coming to the Rockies seven years ago, I have learned that none of the bird studies that I have done in the past are adequate here. They all are useful, but none are adequate and I might guess that that is even more true in the Canadian Rockies.
- Yellowstone National Park/Targhee National Forest story: When I first saw the boundary between this natural landscape of old-growth and wildfire patches in the Park and the human driven landscape of the Targhee, I expected that diversity of native species would differ between them. This is not what we found for birds, however. Neither bird abundance nor richness was significantly different between these two landscapes, and abundance was very low in both.
- If not this, then what?
- Reviewed abiotic factors.
- It quickly becomes apparent that biological activity is structured by abiotic factors.
- Topography drives climate, soils, water, which drive biological activity.
- Reviewed a conceptual model.

### **Hypotheses**

- Hypotheses 2: Strong abiotic gradients (topography, climate, soil) cause native species abundances and richness to be high only in localized hot spots across the landscape.
- Background
- Why Birds, trees, shrubs?
  1. US Forest Service and others required by law to maintain viable populations of native species.
  2. Species likely have value economically, (for example, aspen on property).
  3. We want to sample as many species and as many different kinds of species as possible to test hypotheses and help the Task Force make management recommendations.
  4. We are beginning to deal with other groups – for example, Lauren's using simpler habitat functions for mammals, amphibians, and reptiles around Big Sky.

### **Results**

Cover type, climate, and parent material together explained the most variation in bird species richness and total bird abundance. Cottonwood, aspen, and willow cover types supported 50% to 90% higher species richness and total abundance than lodge pole pine, grassland, and sage habitats. We think this is because these cover types are high both in Net Primary Production and vegetation structure. Bird species richness and abundance were best explained by high minimum June temperature. Climate may directly influence bird physiology or food supplies. Both bird response variables were relatively high on wet alluvial soils.

We extrapolated bird richness and abundance over the study area based on cover type and elevation. Predicted bird species richness and total abundance were relatively low over most of the study area and high only in localized settings. Hot spots for predicted bird richness (>25 species) and total abundance (>3 observations/ha) were rare (2.65% of the study area) primarily at lower elevations (90% were below 2178 meters) and 42.70% were on private lands. Only 2.95% of the area of hot-spot habitats were in Yellowstone National Park.

The results suggest that topography, climate, and soils constrain distribution of habitats and birds across the study area such that species richness and total abundance are concentrated in localized hot spots primarily at lower elevations, mostly outside of the Park and on or near private lands.

After the presentation, the following comments were made:

- Is this assessment limited because it only studies birds? Is it legitimate?
- Birds are recognized as indicators and have been used as indicators in many studies.
- Within the bird family habitat is used very differently, they make a living 100 different ways.
- Birds are an incredibly diverse set of species.
- If you sample enough birds, this will represent other species that use riparian habitat.
- The association is birds are surrogate to wildlife.
- This study focuses on species abundance and diversity in the broad sense.
- Andy Hansen and Jay Rotella have experience in working with other river systems.
- Citing the many studies that they have done in this region, Andy Hansen and Jay Rotella have had good working relationships with landowners.
- When asked if this study will provide viable wildlife data required by the Corps, Allan Steinle commented that it should provide satisfactory results for the Corps.
- The assessment would involve data collection at approximately 25 sites (spending two/three hours per site, two/three times) from May to July 2001 and 2002.
- The budget was a major factor in deciding which species could be studied; birds are a very cost effective way to assess wildlife use of habitat.

Duncan Patten reported that the Technical Advisory Committee is supportive of the newly submitted Wildlife Assessment. Duncan plans to send the proposal outside of the TAC to two other individuals for peer review; but he does not believe that those reviews will change the proposal in a major way. It may need minor “tweaking,” that’s all. Duncan would bring the proposal back to the Task Force if something unusual surfaced from that process.

Andy Hansen and Jay Rotella will need time to arrange for vehicles, hire a crew, and find students for the project. A decision from the Task Force no later than March 2001 would be helpful for planning purposes.

Andy Hansen and Jay Rotella explained that the proposal reviewed by the Task Force was their first draft, and that they had made a few minor changes to the proposal in a second draft after a discussion with Duncan. Changes made were replacing the word “wildlife” with the word “birds,” as the focus of the study. They would make that draft available to the Task Force the next day.

Task Force members were asked for comments or a decision. Jerry O’Hair commented that he wanted to wait for the revised version of the proposal before making any decision. The Task Force decided to revisit this on December 12, 2000; Liz will get the second draft of the proposal to them before that meeting for review.

## **V. Socio-Economic Subcommittee**

Liz Galli-Noble updated the Task Force on the Socio-Economic Request for Proposal (RFP). She provided a list of individuals and firms that requested a copy of the RFP. The deadline for the proposal submittal is December 15, 2000. The Subcommittee then plans to review the proposals over the holidays and will set up interviews with a select few applicants in early January 2001.

Amy Miller reported the expenses for the advertising of the RPF in the local newspapers. These expenses will be charged to Liz's operating budget under communications: Livingston Enterprise \$32.00; Bozeman Chronicle \$32.00; Billings Gazette \$116.20.

## **VI. Fish Aquatic Habitat Study**

John Bailey explained to the Task Force members that the second phase of the Fisheries investigation (also known as the Fish Habitat Study) has never been officially approved through a motion. However, the Task Force has been raising money for the study for a year through the grant process. The investigation has also been included in the Annual Report budget for a year.

Duncan explained that is not correct to call the habitat portion of this study "Phase II" because in fact the second phase of this study is a combination of the fish populations study and the fish habitat study. He provided the following information on the overall fisheries investigation:

Goals:

1. Estimate fish habitat changes resulting from past channel modifications.
2. Quantify impacts of different types of channel modifications on fish habitats.
3. Identify potential linkages between critical habitat types and fish populations.

Approach: Control-treatment stratification and sampling protocol.

- a. Controls are reaches with no channel modification.
- b. Treatments are reaches with channel modification.

Phase I. Extensive, low-resolution analysis of entire study area. (USGS--Helena District)

General interpretation of potential effects on fish habitat attributable to channel alteration activities.

Concentrate on effects on availability of shallow, low-velocity habitat types.

Result will be two habitats versus discharge curves.

Phase II. Quantify the relative severity of impacts of different types of channel modifications with critical habitat types and fish populations.

Carter Bridge to Mission Creek

- a. Intensely study compact sites with and without channel modifications.
- b. Develop one-dimensional hydraulic models (USGS--Helena).
- c. Develop two dimensional habitat models (USGS--BRD).
- d. Literature review of fish habitat requirements (MSU).
- e. Sample fish within the different sites (MSU).
- f. Habitat/population analysis (USGS—BRD and MSU).

The Task Force has discussed this study on many occasions. The USGS--Biological Research Division wrote the proposal in late 1998/early 1999 and the study has been discussed at four Task Force meeting since then. Liz applied for funds to complete the Fish Habitat Study (Phase II) through the May 2000 RDGP grant. The study is considered a high priority for the Corps as well as other Task Force researchers.

Because this study has previously been approved by the Task Force through the indirect means described above,

a formal motion of approval was not warranted. John Bailey simply asked for comment on the study, and Task Force members unanimously supported the Fisheries Investigation as presented.

## **VII. Outreach and Education Activities Updates**

(1) John Bailey, Liz Galli-Noble, Duncan Patten, Dave Haug, and Stan Sternberg attended the Yellowstone River Inter-Agency Roundtable in Billings on October 25 and 26, 2000. The Yellowstone River Conservation District Council (YRCDC), Greater Yellowstone Coalition, American Rivers, and the Yellowstone River Conservation Forum co-sponsored the roundtable. The Task Force was asked to give a presentation, which Duncan Patten and Liz did as a team. The response to this presentation was overwhelmingly positive. It helped many to better understand the Task Force and what we are accomplishing. Liz thanked the YRCDC for providing the Task Force with an opportunity to communicate with the public and governmental agencies.

(2) Liz gave a presentation to the Livingston Rotary Club on November 13, 2000. The presentation went well, and she hopes to do more of these in the future. Anyone who wishes to have the Task Force present information to their group, please contact Liz Galli-Noble at #222-3701.

(3) Liz is revisiting the idea of a Wetland Workshop with the Montana Watercourse, which the Task Force had planned to host in 2000. The original effort was postponed. Liz, Duncan, and Jen Elliot (MT Watercourse) will put together more information on the workshop in the next two weeks and present that to the Task Force at the December 12 meeting.

Individuals have suggested to Liz that the local landowners need to see the overall presentation of the Cumulative Effects Investigation. The 2001 workshops could be the perfect opportunity to accomplish this. Two workshops, one in a lecture setting and one on-the-ground, could be set up in March and April 2001 to show landowners the overall Task Force project design and data collection techniques used by research teams.

## **VIII. Coordinator's request to change from "comp time" to "over time"**

Liz Galli-Noble has written a letter to the Park Conservation District and John Bailey requesting to change from "comp time" to "over time". "Comp time" has not been working for Liz for the past year because she is unable to use the accumulated time. Liz has the choice to use comp time or over time, and she has chosen to change to over time.

A subcommittee of Task Force members met in August to evaluate Liz's job performance, at that meeting they also requested that she "burn" all her "comp time" by the end of December 2000. The Park Conservation District was concerned with the liability of Liz carrying a large amount of "comp" hours. As of November 12, 2000, Liz has used all of her "comp time." The Park Conservation District has set a limited amount of over time hours for Amy Miller, District Administrator, and the same would apply for Liz. All District employees need to be treated equally. The over time hours are not to exceed five hours per week or twenty hours per month. The Park Conservation District is looking at options to help with Amy's and Liz's workload. There is currently enough funding in grants to compensate Liz for her over time hours.

**Jerry O'Hair made a motion to approve paying Liz over time for five hours per week. It was seconded by Brant Oswald. The motion passed unanimously.**

## **IX. 2000 Annual Report**

The Task Force reviewed a draft copy of the 2000 Annual Report. Several changes were suggested by Task

Force members. Liz will make those edits to the Annual Report and get a copy of the revised version to the Task Force members by December 8, which will give them four days to review the document before the next Task Force meeting.

John Bailey has a meeting with Governor Marc Racicot and Mark Simonich (DEQ Director) on December 15, 2000. John will update them on the Task Force, and thank them for their support.

**X. Schedule Future Task Force Meetings**

Liz Galli-Noble would like Task Force members to call her at 222-3701 if they will be unable to attend scheduled meetings.

Next Task Force meetings are:

**Tuesday, December 12, 2000 at the Yellowstone Inn**

Tuesday, January 16, 2001

Tuesday, February 27, 2001

**XI. The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.**